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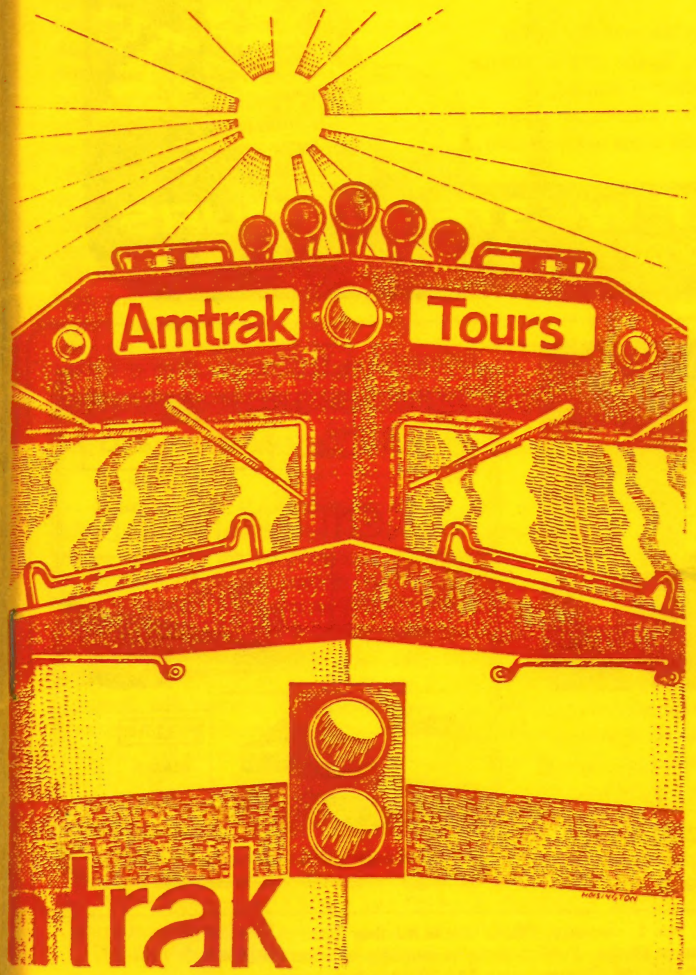

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Readers Rate The Trains

TAKE AMTRAK FROM JANUARY TO DECEMBER.

Amtrak's new Auto Train, carrying passengers and their automobiles between Virginia and Florida, meets Amtrak's Silver Meteor, providing passenger service between New York and Florida.

Amtrak's 1984 calendar, pictured here, is now available.

This year's calendar features another beautiful painting by artist Gil Reid, from a series done exclusively for Amtrak.

The calendars are $3.50 each. Or you can get 2 for $6.00 and 3 for $8.00. Calendars for 1980, 1981, 1982 and 1983 are also available at the same price.

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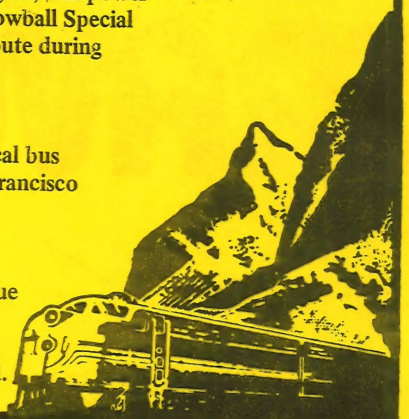
WINTER RAILS

ON THE MC CLOUD RIVER RAILROAD

Alco 2-6-2 No. 25, under steam again, will power a nostalgic rerun of the scenic Snowball Special over the spectacular Mt. Shasta route during Washington's Birthday Weekend, February 18 & 19, 1984.

Convenient Amtrak and economical bus packages are available from San Francisco Bay Area.

Contact Great Western Tours for detailed flyer. Space on this unique excursion is strictly limited. Tickets may be ordered by phone, and most credit cards are accepted.



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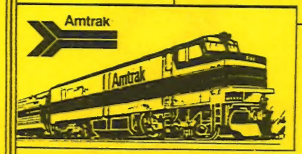

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ON THE COVER

This drawing of an Amtrak F40 locomotive is taken from the cover of an Amtrak Tours folder promoting trips to Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, using the SAN JOAQUIN. For an account of a trip to Yosemite National Park on the same train, see page 14.

EDITOR'S NOTE: With this year volume we are resuming the practice of numbering our issues the First and Second of each month on the cover. This issue is labelled "1 January 1984", and next issue will be "2 January 1984."

BOOKS

Dining on Rails—An Encyclopedia of Railroad China, by Richard W. Luckin, has just been published. This is the first book of its kind dealing exclusively with dining car china. Its 320 pages with over 900 b&w photos, provide an in-depth look at passenger train china of the world (but primarily N. America) from the mid 1800s to 1983. The book covers dining car china history, manufacturers & usage, and there are detailed descriptions of 580 patterns. The photos are not only of china (photo at right, of Canadian Pacific 1883 china is taken from the book), but also of dining cars, trains, brochures, etc. This book is a gem, and highly recommended. Available thru RK Publishing, 3875 Eaton St, Denver CO 80212. $43.95. Book is hard-bound, in limited edition of 2000 copies.

AMTRAK UNDERGOES BIG MANAGEMENT SHAKEUP

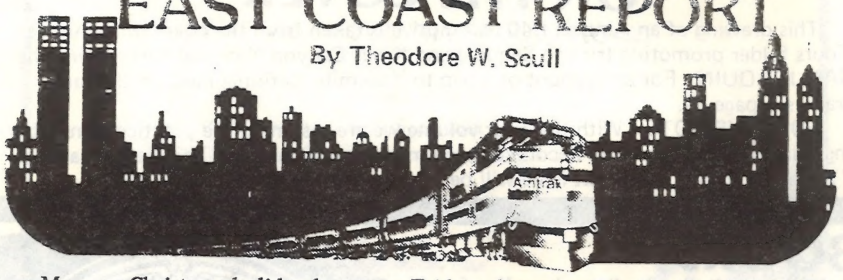
Amtrak said that effective Jan 31, Clark Tyler has resigned from its staff. Tyler came to Amtrak during the presidency of Alan Boyd, and was one of the most influential figures in the corporation.

In the staff reorganization accompanying Tyler's departure, the incumbent Group Vice Presidents will become Executive Vice Presidents. Thomas P. Hackney Jr, now Group VP—Operations & Maintenance and Chief Operating Officer will become Executive VP and Chief Operating Officer. Paul F. Mickey, now VP and General Counsel, will become Executive VP—Law and Public Affairs. Anthony Mondello, now General Counsel, will become Administrator of the Law Dept. under Mickey and will be a member of the Executive Staff. The Management Committee, chaired by Graham Claytor, will consist of the President (Claytor), and four Executive VPs: Mr. Hackney, Mr. Mickey, Don R. Brazier, Executive VP—Finance & Administration, and William S. Norman, Executive VP—Marketing and Business Development. George F. Daniels, VP—Labor Relations, will report to the Executive VP & Chief Operating Officer. Departments that previously reported to Mr. Tyler will be reassigned. Gene N. Eden, VP—Passenger Services, will report directly to Executive VP Hackney. James H. English, VP—Government Affairs, and Cathy A. Goldstein, Assistant VP—Corporate Communications, will report to Executive VP Mickey.

The fact that there was no indication of what new position Tyler would take would seem to indicate that he resigned from the corporation suddenly as a result of some internal conflict in the organization. He is expected to continue in the field of transportation.

EAST COAST REPORT

By Theodore W. Scull



My own Christmas holiday began on Friday afternoon, Dec 23 when I slipped down to Track 5 at Penn Station in advance of the boarding announcement for the 5:06pm VALLEY FORGE to Philadelphia, Paoli and Harrisburg.

The nicely refurbished original Metroliner equipment was most attra tive, but the ride was something else again, providing the roughest trip that I have had down the Northeast Corridor in years, or since this stock was shunted to the Harrisburg line. The VALLEY FORGE bounced and careened thru interlockings that I did not even know existed.

Instead of using the North Philadelphia-Main Line cutoff at Zoo Junction, the train arrives at the upper level of 30th Street Station, where the engineer moves to the other end for the final run to Harrisburg. It was something of an event for me to get off at Paoli, but father wanted to take his family to his favorite restaurant in Strafford, hence Paoli was more convenient for everything, and the extra miles cost me only a dollar. The family station wagon paced the train from Berwyn but then lost out at a traffic light alongside the station at Daylesford, the PAOLI LOCAL stop before Paoli.

On Monday my brother and I drove down to Atlantic City to have a look at the sites where several of the casinos plan expansions, including Resorts International's proposed railroad station and casino. The company's offer of $23 million, the State of New Jersey's share, removed one of the last hurdles holding up the plans for the high-speed line, which also now includes local stops at Cherry Hill, Hammonton and Egg Harbor City.

The old Atlantic City railroad station is now the city's bus station, and still looks to be a fitting gateway to the city from the park in front of the terminal building.

The proposed rail fare on the high-speed line is $20 roundtrip from Philadelphia and $40 from New York. Presently, the cheapest roundtrip charter bus fare from New York is $10, and some casinos provide riders with $10 in quarters when they stop off. Will $40 in coins be in the offing for rail riders?

I was not prepared for the utter devastation of the neighborhood just to the north of Resorts Internation's present casino hotel. The only other district thatcan match the scene of burned-out buildings and vacant lots is New York's own South Bronx, heretofore in my mind at least, the most poignant symbol of urban decay.

Later in the day, my brother left me off at 30th Street Station for the trip back to New York. The station was packed with people waiting for delayed trains, ranging from five minutes to one hour late, with the exception of the eastbound BROADWAY, which was reported as indefinitely delayed. The southbound CRESCENT was running in two section,—one to Washington and the other all the way to New Orleans. The southbound YANKEE CLIPPER also ran in two sections—one originating in Boston and the other in New York.

In the main waiting room I saw the newly-opened McDonald's for the first time. It had an inviting look that was certainly an improvement over the dreary old restaurant it replaced. Some additional seating is provided outside the main restaurant along the recently-refurbished South Arcade. From Dec 26 McDonald's will be open 24 hours a day, reflecting 30th Street's round-the-clock hours. A new bagel store opened, and a Haagen Dazs is promised, all situated along the south side.

For the station's fiftieth anniversary celebration, the Pennsylvania Railroad Eastern Region Group mounted a comprehensive photographic display showing the old West Philadelphia station that once stood on the site; old Broad Street Station, and the construction of Suburban and 30th Street Stations as part of the Philadelphia improvements in the 1930s. Amtrak also plans improvements to the existing station, the system's second busiest with 3.2 million annual riders.

RTN reader Howard Bender and an Amtrak employee both wrote that the lines on Dec 17 to view the train equipment wrapped around the building. In addition to Amtrak's usual roster of equipment, minus the Superliners, was an AUTO TRAIN buffet car. Marshalled down at track level were freight locomotives and rolling stock belonging to Conrail, the Chessie System, the Delaware & Hudson, Boston & Maine and the Maine Central. SEPTA provided a Reading Railroad commuter car that one day will be able to get directly from that railroad to this one, finally erasing all the old distinctions.

The PENNSYLVANIAN due at 4:44pm from Pittsburgh and scheduled out at 5pm as a "clocker" to New York was reported 30mins late, so I decided to take the MERCHANTS LIMITED at 5:21pm and the only train listed on the board as being on time. Standing beyond Location 6 at the very end of a large crowd string along the platform, I stepped aboard the second car, behind the lead club/cafe/coach, and had no trouble getting a window seat.

Two extra coaches were added at the end, a practice not often done anymore, to my knowledge, and we left about 15mins late, losing time all the way to New York because of signal problems. We picked up a bare handful of passengers waiting for the PENNSYLVANIAN during a special North Philadelphia stop and arrived at Penn Station 55 mins late at 7:40pm.

At Penn Station a huge crowd was waiting for this train to New Haven and Boston and for others to the south, while the intermittently troublesome first-generation Solari Board turned up only scattered destinations, departure times and track numbers.

Penn Station New York is due for some $13.2 million in much-needed renovations, including replacemnts for the Solari arrivals and departures boards. The waiting room is to be greatly enlarged to provide for more seating from the present 400 to 1000, and for a separate Metroliner lounge. An Amtrak press release indicated that there would be more ticket windows added, but there are already 19 places to buy Amtrak tickets, and I have yet to see all of them open at one time.

The station is used by 74 million commuters and Amtrak passengers annually. Amtrak's share is 4.8 million (of 19 million nationwide), a far higher figure of corridor and long distance passengers than the old Pennsylvania Railroad envisioned when it planned the new station in the 1960s. We all underwent the trials and tribulations while the old Penn Station was being torn down, and now we can look forward to 2½ years of new construction with hopefully a better facility resulting this time around.

★★★

During the holiday rush, NJ Transit gave out free trips called VIP Anywhere/Anytime Passes, good thru Jan 1 to all eastbound motorists entering New York City via the Lincoln and Holland Tunnels during off-peak hours, to promote their own off-peak bus and rail schedules. A call to NJT's Newark headquarters brought a reply that there was no way to know how many people switched to public transportation because the conductors were only required to lift or punch revenue tickets.

From 6pm New Year's Eve to 6am New Year's Day, NJ Transit offered free bus and train service aboard its 250 buses and 58 trains scheduled during that 12-hour period. The Port Authority did the same for its PATH trains, but the New York City Transit Authority said no to the idea because it stood to lose about $1 million in fares that it could ill afford.

On Dec 30, NJ Transit trains to Phillipsburg made their last runs. NJT made a direct mailing to area residents about extra trains to High Bridge Station and the parallel Route 150 bus service.

★★★

During the holidays period, the 18th, 19th and 20th subway trains jumped the tracks tho furtunately with few injuries reported. However, the number still fell short, by one, of the 1981 record of 21 derailments. In 1982 there were only 12. Cracks have

been discovered in 20 new welds in recently-joined rail sections, and MTA Chairman Robert Kiley ordered an immediate stepped-up track inspection program to begin Jan 3.

One curious note: while all local mass transportation ran on a holiday schedule on Monday, Dec 26 and Monday, Jan 2, the Long Island Rail Road operated regular weekday schedules. One reader said that the LIRR might have been accommodating department store workers and shoppers on big sale and exchange days.

★★★

I began the new year without my favorite ticket agents, Angie at Amtrak's Rockefeller Center Office and Marie at the World Trade Center. Angie retired and Marie was moved to accounting after the staff at the WTC was cut to one clerk. They both began work at the Atlantic Coast Line office on Park Avenue near Grand Central, and when that railroad merged into the Seaboard Coast Line, they moved to the SCL office which on May 1, 1971 became Amtrak's midtown ticket office. They were both unflappable, friendly and always helpful, and they will be sorely missed by all their regular clients.

★★★

On Jan 2 I woke up to learn that I had won my little game with the Transit Authority. The subway token was not changed with the new 15-cent fare increase that went into effect at 12:01am. The net profit for my low-key efforts was: 18 hoarded tokens times 15 cents equals $2.70, which translates into three free 90-cent rides. Some victory.

RAIL CANADA

TRANSPORT 2000 QUEBEC analyzed the timekeeping at Montreal of all the VIA Rail trains from the Maritimes (Montreal-Halifax and Montreal-Gaspe) and the Montreal-Ste-Foy service. The group learned that between Dec 15 and Dec 26, only three trains left Montreal on time to the Maritimes, while none arrived on time. Even the corridor services were badly affected, they said, by engine failures, frozen steam lines, snow, etc. This happened during the busiest weeks for VIA. Passengers waited for hours in crowded stations. In Montreal Central station, it was "complete confusion" every evening, as passengers for the OCEAN waited in line up to 5 hours after the official departure time of the train. The eastbound CANADIAN arrived in Montreal up to 45hrs late. The CANADIAN was at least 12hrs late almost every day since Dec 15. Transport 2000 blamed most of the problems on antiquated equipment, and called for a new equipment order for the transcontinental service.

THE CANADIAN WILL no longer operate out of Montreal, but instead will have Toronto as its eastern terminus. The maintenance shops will also be in Toronto. VIA Rail confirmed the move after a French newspaper, Le Devoir, reported the news on Dec 31. The changes will take effect in late spring, said Transport 2000, which denounced the move as "another important cutback in our national rail service." Also being cut, T-2000 said, is the Port Hawksbury-Sydney N.S. portion of one of the two daily railiners between Truro and Sydney, and the Ottawa-Brockville portion of the overnight CAVALIER. On the other hand, the Winnipeg-Edmonton train will resume operation Jun 3, 1984, and the Edmundston-Moncton N.B. train should run again on a tri-weekly service next fall. In a December conversation with VIA Rail president Pierre Franche, Guy Chartrand, president of Transport 2000 Canada, asked him to re-route the CANADIAN via Ottawa, as it was before the Pepin cutbacks. The present route of the train is too circuitous, Chartrand said, and the running time of 85 hours is much too long. Chartrand came away from the meeting with a feeling that VIA cares little about the future of the transcontinental service.

THE OCEAN DERAILED at Amqui, Que. in late December, probably Dec 27. Eleven cars left the track, and two passengers were injured. Passengers arrived Montreal about 12 hours late. The next train out ofHalifax was delayed 24 hours by the derailment. The Montreal Gazette reported that the train ran out of food twice and VIA employees had to buy food and plates locally at station stops. Among numerous other winter VIA horror stories, the CANADIAN was 32½hrs late into Toronto on Dec 20 after leaving Vancouver Dec 15. A passenger quoted in the Toronto Globe & Mail called the trip a "nightmare." The train was delayed by frozen car parts and cracked rails, as Western Canada experienced record cold temperatures. The train that left Vancouver Dec 16 was only one hour behind it into Toronto Union Station, running nine hours late.

TRANSPORT MINISTER AXWORTHY at a Dec 16 press conference in a dining car in Winnipeg announced the approval of new maintenance facilities for VIA, the restoration of the Moncton-Edmundston and the Winnipeg-Melville-Edmonton trains, and said that VIA will be authorized to build new trains for low-density lines. Such new equipment would be compatible with transcon equipment the company will buy later. Axworthy said he did not believe that profitability was the goal for VIA; he said instead that VIA is a "public service" and that he knew of no country where such a public service made a profit. "A passenger train service costs money," he said, adding that "non-monetary considerations should be considered, such as national unity and socil and economic development. We do not measure a railway service as would an accountant." At the same time, Federal Finance Minister Marc Lalonde announced that the VIA link to downtown Quebec City would be re-established in 1986 at Palais Station. Replacing the access line will take 18mos of work. He said also that the Federal government has transferred ownership of the two LRC trains that Amtrak had leased, to VIA. They may be used on a line out of Montreal.

URBAN-SUBURBAN TRANSIT

SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE (Jan 8) editorialized in favor of funding the proposed extension of the Caltrans Peninsula commute line to the Transbay Terminal in San Francisco. Competing with this plan for funding is BART's proposal for an extension from Daly City to the S.F. Airport (in San Mateo County). The paper said that the Caltrain extension , at a cost of $300 million, is the "vastest and fastest traffic diversion proposal in sight." Public hearings will be held on these plans on Jan 12 in San Francisco and Jan 26 in Oakland.

HOUSTON'S METROPOLITAN TRANSIT Authority in Dec was told by Highway Commission Chairman Robert Lanier to proceed with busway construction and postpone any plans to ask voters to approve rail transit.

PORTLAND, OREGON'S TRI-MET system on Dec 15 completed purchase of the Portland Traction Company's right of way in Southeast Portland and Gresham, from owners SP and UP for $2.9 million. In other news, a recent consulting study of the transit system recommended an end to the free-ride "Fareless Square" in the downtown area and restriction of articulated bus operation to rush hours only. The artics were called gas-guzzlers and non cost-effective outside of peak periods.

NEW YORK'S MTA said on Dec 22 that it would be willing to consider the installation of elevators for handicapped and elderly in stations as they are modernized. A plan to make 27 subway stations accessible was proposed.

STEERING MECHANISM DEFECTS were found in almost half of the 850 Grumman Flxible buses in New York City, the MTA said Jan 9.

BIDS ARE CLOSING Jan 11 on 18 new diesel locomotives for the Caltrans San Francisco Peninsula commute line.

NEW JERSEY TRANSIT put special schedules into effect on Dec 23 and Dec 30 to add extra trains and make additional stops on other trains.

SAN JOSE'S WORST transit corridor is the Fremont-San Jose route. Santa Clara County Supervisor Rod Diridon is now chairman of a little-publicized study to determine whether a BART or light rail line for the corridor would be feasible. Besides north-south travel paralleling highway 17, the study will consider an east-west route along highway 237 or Trimble Road.

SEATTLE METRO TRANSIT has begun design work on expansion of its trolley bus system. First route to be converted to trolley from diesel will be a thru- routed line operating on 35th Ave SW in West Seattle over the new high-level West Seattle Bridge (opened in mid-Nov) with two branches in the Ballard area—one on 15th Ave and the other on 24th Ave NW. More routes may be converted as funds become available.

Amtrak's Ice Follies

TRAIN TRAVEL AT CHRISTMAS, 1983

By Andrew C. Selden

December 22, 4:45am. I am lying awake, waiting for my alarm to go off, to signal the start of our long-awaited Christmas train trip from Minneapolis to Springfield MA to visit relatives. We have booked scarce sleeper space all the way.

I dial Amtrak to check on the status of the EMPIRE BUILDER, train 8. I am apprehensive because last night it was reported three hours late out of Williston. After enduring nearly 10 minutes of Amtrak Muzak, I am told by an agent who comes on the line that train 8 is reported 3hrs, 55mins late out of Devil's Lake. Our connection to the LAKE SHORE LIMITED, carded for just over three hours, is obviously in jeopardy. Recalling that "late trains get later," I dial Northwest Airlines, and after 5mins of Muzak, reserve the last two seats on a 1:50pm 727 to Midway Airport.

2:30pm. Northwest Flight 808 is sold out and departs 40mins late, due to late inbound equipment, but we have plenty of cushion, and Northwest's agents seem to be in generally good spirits.

5:00pm. We arrive at Chicago Union Station. We note that train 8 is now posted to arrive at 10:10pm, fully seven hours late. I am glad we flew. We assured making the LAKE SHORE, and saved $70 in the bargain (over $100 counting meals). My wife and I have our 4-month-old baby in tow, and would not relish the prospect of spending the night in Chicago, even at Amtrak's expense, and most likely getting only coach seats on tomorrow's train 48.

5:10pm. I check with the agent. No. 48 is expected to depart on time. "Most everything has been going out on time," says the agent. Our first bad sign follows immediately, as trains 21 and 3 are each called for the first time 15mins *after* their scheduled departure times.

6:10pm. Passengers are gathering near the gates as the LAKE SHORE's 6:20 departure time approaches. The Union Station PA blurts out, "Go back to the lounge where it is warm. The LAKE SHORE LIMITED is delayed. We will call you when it is ready to board." Apart from that announcement, no one at Union Station has any information, or much concern, about the departure of the LAKE SHORE. Late arrivals from the west seem to be a much bigger problem. I check the arrival screen and see that no. 22 is 6½hrs late, no. 4 3hrs, 50mins late, no. 8 7hrs late, no. 6 6hrs late, no. 51 1hr, 40mins late, no. 365 1hr, 45mins late. We learn later that one train 5 reached Oakland 22hrs late, and that several sold-out long hauls were seriously delayed on Christmas Day because Amtrak ran out of diesel fuel at Washington.

As we wait, incoming passengers from train 4 who have missed their connections are being "accommodated" in the Amtrak passenger lounge with a choice between going on by Greyhound, or a free night in the Holiday Inn and taking their chances on tomorrow's trains. They are not happy. Hard feelings are evident, and arguments break out between passengers and Amtrak officials.

Waiting in Chicago Union Station is not pleasant. The choices are between the old main concourse, which is cold, drafty and dirty,and the Amtrak passenger lounge, which is warm, overcrowded, dirty, and so thick with cigarette smoke as to appear fog-bound. Balancing the risks, we choose warmth over clean air.

We note large posters advertising the "fall fare bargain" of the All Aboard America promotion. These are out of date, and don't reference the holiday blackout period. They make about as much sense as the Metroliner posters in the tunnel at Los Angeles UNion Passenger Terminal.

7:50pm. The PA announces the LAKE SHORE LIMITED is enroute from the yards, and passengers are advised to go to the gate area. We hold back, as there is a large mob headed for the LAKE SHORE, the concourse area is extremely cold,

I know it will be a while before the train actually begins to load, and we have Pullman space reserved and do not need to rush aboard. It ocurs to us that if we had flown east, we'd be there by now and would have spent less money to get there than going by train. Our baby is being remarkably patient but is obviously reaching the end of his rope.

8:25pm. The train begins loading. Families with children bundled up against the 10-degree cold (indoors), who have been waiting in the unheated gate area for 30 minutes, surge forward. Armed security officers block the flow, to try to allow the train to be boarded in batches. No effort is made to board sleeping car or longer distance riders first, or to board by car number. The Boston sleeper is at the head end of the train, 15 cars from the gate. We steer thru the crowds on the platform and the 30-below-zero windchill looking for car line no. 4805. We find it—car 2988, ex-ATSF "Palm Dale" running backwards but clean and set up by the book—the Pullman employee manual, not Amtrak's book. The porter escorts us to bedroom E, and we settle in.

8:54pm. Train 48 is finally underway, 2½ hours late, but not for long. At 9:07 we make our fourth stop since leaving the platform, and we are not yet by the 12th Street yards.

9:23pm. We are underway again.

9:45pm. Wife and baby are settling in to their berths, exhausted, and I head to the diner for dinner. The steward is struggling to maintain control of the crowds surging into the diner, but as a single I am seated immediately. Dinner arrives quickly, but is clearly pre-cooked and over-cooked. Returning to the sleeper, I note the line in the lounge car stretches the entire length of the car into the vestibule area.

December 23, 8:00am. After a long night of start and stop operations suggesting signal failures or widespread slow orders, we awaken. The train has been stopped for a long period of time. This is not a good sign. We are in a freight yard somewhere, but the porter doesn't know exactly where. He announces we are six hours late. He has shined my shoes overnight. We get underway and soon discover that we are just leaving Cleveland, where we have spent one hour trying to thaw frozen pipes in the diner.

8:30am. The train chief makes his first appearance in the Boston sleeper to announce that there is no food service in the diner, but that a complimentary breakfast will be served once the pipes have been thawed and the diner crew gets set up. The breakfast will be served car-by-car, and the chief will call our car over the PA. I do a quick calculation in my head: at 48 seats a turn, and 25 minutes per sitting, it could be five hours until the entire complement of passengers is served.

11:05am. The diner is still serving breakfast as we stop at Buffalo Depew Station for another hour,mostly spent refueling our three F40 engines, one by one, from a contractor's one-hose truck.

Noon. It is snowing briskly, and even the Conrail conductor is obviously frustrated by the train's slow progress.

During the long Buffalo station stop, it becomes clear that my wife and baby are both beginning to lose patience. My wife is beginning to talk about flying home; the train is not worth the hassle.

During the Buffalo stop, two explanations for the late departure from Chicago are produced from various crew members: (1) we were waiting for power from incoming trains; or (2) Amtrak refused to dispatch train 48 except with the particular New York -based locomotives it came in with yesterday morning, and we had waited for those engines to be serviced and fueled at 12th Street.

I walk the train. I see no empty coach seats. The lounge car is also full. We are all beginning to feel claustrophobic.

12:31pm. We are underway again, 7½ hours behind schedule out of Buffalo. During our one-hour stop at Buffalo, three westbound Conrail piggyback hotshots have gone by. I wonder why Amtrak can't boost revenues by carrying COFC mail traffic. The answer is obvious: it moves faster by Conrail.

2:00pm. The dining car and the lounge car are now entirely sold out of all food and beverage items. The train chief comes on the PA to promise that box lunches will be put on at Syracuse.

The box lunches are *not* put on at Syracuse. The chief comes on the PA again blaming "inadequate personnel" for the failure to load food at Syracuse. He offers passengers who are "seriously affected" by this his business card and a Washington address to write to to express their feelings. Many families with small children are traveling, and we wonder how parents care for their young ones when there is no milk or other food aboard. Thoughts of serious suffering by small children arise. We have brought powdered formula for our baby, and as long as the water holds out we will be all right.

5:20pm. We depart Schenectady, having picked up 15mins on the schedule. The Conrail main line is smooth and fast, but we are obviously not exceeding 79mph, and sometimes not even 60mph. The train chief comes on the PA again to promise box lunches will be loaded at Albany. The real function and value of Amtrak's costly on-board services train chief program now becomes apparent—they are corporate apologists. They are earning their keep in that capacity this trip. Would the huge cost of the train chiefs be necessary if the conductors were in Amtrak's employ, doing their traditional jobs properly?

"THE EXPERIENCE OF TRAIN 48 WAS REPEATED ACROSS THE SYSTEM MANY TIMES DURING THIS CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY."

5:43pm. Arrive Albany. Passengers unload, and the New York section is pulled away from the rear of what is now 448, consisting of a single F40 locomotive, two baggage cars (one carrying Chicago-Springfield mail), the Boston sleeper, three Amfleet II coaches and the Heritage lounge. The toilets on the Amfleet II coaches are all frozen and inoperative. The lounge is also frozen, and the Albany car knockers discover that its brake rigging is frozen. There is much rushing about by a committee of a dozen-odd car knockers and supervisors who are trying to fix the toilets and decide what to do with the lounge. A coach passenger shouts out, "Forget the toilets and let's get going—we've done without for 20 hours now." An Amtrak supervisor at Albany orders the conductor to get underway without toilets, and to simply drop the lounge car on the Boston and Albany main line. He threatens to report the conductor for holding the train to fix the toilets. The conductor refuses to depart on a 5-hour trip to Boston with 180 passengers and no functional toilets, or to foul the B&A main with a bad-order car. Unlike the Amtrak supervisor, he knows train 449 is due in soon. The B&A crew observe that the lounge has been written up repeatedly, but never repaired in Boston or Chicago.

Sleeper "Palm Dale" has a bad master cylinder. Every time we brake to a stop or release the brakes, a tremendous thump shudders the entire car, but I am afraid to mention it to the car knockers for fear they will bad-order the sleeper out from under us. The coaches are still full. Their riders' mood is ugly.

The New York section is annulled and turned, and a makeup train dispatched as 48.

7:00pm. We drop off the lounge on a station siding at Albany. We hope the box lunches have been transferred to our train, as we have been without any food or beverages for nearly six hours.

7:05pm. We depart Albany. The B&A crew promises we will arrive Pittsfield in one hour, and Springfield in two hours. This is our first sign of hope, because that would amount to knocking 20mins off the public timetable.

7:33pm. A new train chief on 448 delivers free, but stale, chicken salad sandwiches and warm Coca Cola to our room in the sleeper. His heart seems to be in the right place, but he is clearly in over his head dealing with this still-full train of angry passengers. What good is warm Coca-Cola if you are traveling with an infant who needs whole milk?

7:59pm. We arrive Pittsfield as promised in 55mins. MassARP president and NARP director Kevin Gregoire meets us at the Pittsfield "station," a platform and bus shelter. Kevin points out that he has succeeded in persuading Amtrak to install lights to illuminate the platform. This is a major capital improvement for Pittsfield. I think of how much better off Pittsfield is with this modest facility than San Antonio had been with

the infamous "rabbit patch" stop on the INTER-AMERICAN. About 20 passengers detrain, and no one boards. We are underway within one minute. Kevin hands up MassARP enrollment cards for my wife and baby. Wife comments that we all ought to give up trying to improve Amtrak and find something productive to do.

Kevin later tells me that he had worked half the day on the 23rd trying to scare up Amtrak's contractor to get Pittsfield's platform plowed, and the other half trying (unsuccessfully) to get accurate information from Amtrak to keep waiting passengers at Pittsfield's unheated bus shelter informed about the status of 448, and eventually helping them board a substituted bus. He also tells me we did well, as train 448 of Dec 24 was nine hours late, with no substituted bus. Did passengers at Pittsfield stand in the 10-degree cold for nine hours waiting for their train? Would they have done so but for volunteers like Kevin?

8:39pm. We achieve a running meet with 449—I hope they do better tonight than we have done. We hear later that 49 is eight hours late into Chicago.

9:05pm. Arrive Springfield eight hours late. My brother meets us on the platform. I have never been so happy to get off a train in my life.

December 27. American Airlines brings us home in four hours. The planes are full and oversold, and O'Hare is total chaos, but an obviously well-trained and disciplined *professional* transportation company is coping with Christmas crush loads with astonishing efficiency. Wife concedes that she will probably travel by train with me again, but never at Christmas or Thanksgiving, and never with dependent children.

★★★

What conclusions can be drawn from this experience? Clearly, in historical record-cold temperatures, pipes are going to freeze and signal systems fail. Travelers should expect that. Still, Amfleet II coaches are but the latest variation on what is now a 15-year-old design. Surely in that time a way could be found to keep water pipes and toilets from freezing in predictable subfreezing environments. But cold weather doesn't begin to explain the systemwide management failures this Christmas.

Dispatching a train three hours late from Amtrak's largest single terminal facility for lack of power is inexcusable. Equally inexcusable is the grossly inadequate food and lounge service provided on a train such as the LAKE SHORE LIMITED. Serving an 11-revenue car, 500-passenger train with the same number of food service cars as are assigned to a 4-car, 4-hour, 50- to 75-passenger Metroliner is criminal negligence by Amtrak management. Understocking a train during the Christmas rush is even more despicable. Families and small children travel at Christmas, and they should not be expected to suffer the privation of going hungry for several hours because incompetent cost accountants in Washington headquarters refuse to stock diners and lounges adequately. The dining car on no. 48 was running out of items at the end of the first sitting for dinner leaving Chicago. Why was no emergency food provided anywhere during the 12-hour run between Cleveland and Albany? Amtrak was made specifically aware of the late operation of the train, and the shortage of food, before the train even arrived in Cleveland.

From a marketing perspective, the operation of even one train such as 48 on Dec 22 is a catastrophe from which all of Bill Norman's and Bob Gall's "feeling good" corporate image advertising can never recover. Train 48 of the 22nd will disgorge altogether more than 800 disgusted passengers, each of whom may be expected to relate their experience to 5 to 10 other people. Perhaps 7000 to 8000 people will have been permanently lost as potential customers. No amount of image advertising can recover from that. The experience of train 48 was repeated across the system many times during this Christmas holiday.

We, and thousands of other high-revenue customers, have learned the hard way that Amtrak is not a reliable, all-weather mode, and that, this Christmas, we do not "feel good" about riding the trains.

Amtrak has reached the stage in its corporate life where it is time to start performing and stop making excuses. If Graham Claytor is not sufficiently perceptive or caring or competent to get rid of the incompetents who populate his management structure, and replace them with people who produce, as American Airlines was doing, then we should get Graham Claytor out of the way along with his staff and replace them with people who can get the job done.

Readers Rate The Trains

1—2—3—4—5—6—7—8—9

Extremely poor — Average, acceptable — Extremely good

Long Distance Trains

	A. Overall rating	B. Operating crew	C. Dining crew	D. Lounge crew	E. Food quality	F. Car condition (mechanical)	G. Car cleanliness	H. Track condition	I. Scheduling	J. Station condition	K. Type of cars—appropriate?	Rank in survey
SILVER METEOR	7.9	7.7	7.2	5.5	7.2	7.7	7.3	8.0	7.8	6.8	7.6	1
EMPIRE BUILDER	7.8	8.1	7.0	7.0	6.9	7.9	7.9	6.8	7.1	7.3	8.2	2
COAST STARLIGHT	7.5	7.1	5.6	5.9	5.7	8.0	7.5	6.3	7.2	7.1	8.5	3
SILVER STAR	7.4	6.6	6.2	7.5	6.5	7.1	7.6	7.1	7.3	7.6	7.7	4
CARDINAL	7.2	7.6	5.3	7.8	3.7	7.2	6.2	7.2	8.0	7.0	7.8	5
PIONEER	7.2	6.6	6.8	7.2	6.4	7.2	7.6	8.0	6.0	8.0	8.2	5
NIGHT OWL	7.1	6.8	--	6.5	4.5	6.8	5.5	7.8	7.8	5.5	7.3	7
BROADWAY LIMITED	7.1	6.8	6.2	6.9	5.5	7.6	7.1	6.3	5.7	5.1	7.9	8
SUNSET LIMITED	7.0	7.1	5.0	5.1	5.6	7.8	7.9	7.2	6.8	7.6	7.8	9
CRESCENT	7.0	6.8	5.5	5.8	6.0	7.5	8.0	7.7	7.2	6.3	7.7	9
CAPITOL LIMITED	6.9	7.6	4.8	5.7	4.4	7.1	7.3	7.0	5.8	6.9	7.3	11
LAKE SHORE LIMITED	6.8	7.4	6.0	7.0	6.3	7.4	7.5	7.7	7.0	6.9	7.4	12
SOUTHWEST LIMITED	6.8	6.9	5.5	6.2	4.4	6.9	7.1	6.1	6.7	6.6	7.9	13
CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR	6.8	7.3	4.6	5.7	5.3	7.1	6.9	6.4	6.6	7.0	7.8	13
DESERT WIND	6.6	7.2	5.0	5.7	4.8	8.1	7.6	7.8	6.9	7.0	6.9	15
MONTREALER	6.6	6.4	6.2	5.5	5.8	6.1	6.9	6.7	7.7	6.4	6.7	16
SPIRIT OF CALIFORNIA	6.3	7.3	6.0	7.4	5.0	7.4	7.3	5.9	7.3	6.4	4.7	17
PALMETTO	6.2	6.2	--	5.0	3.0	6.7	6.2	6.6	6.8	6.2	5.9	18
EAGLE	4.9	6.8	5.1	5.5	5.0	7.4	5.9	4.3	3.9	6.2	7.9	19
ADIRONDACK	4.2	6.2	6.7	---	4.7	4.8	6.2	3.4	3.8	4.0	7.6	20
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	

Here are the results of RTN's ninth Reader Train Rating Survey. This survey covers the period of Apr 24-Oct 29, 1983.

In RTN271, the First July issue of 1983, the last survey was published—survey no. 7, which covered the period of Apr 27-Oct 26, 1980. Still unpublished is our eighth survey, covering Oct 27, 1980-Apr 26, 1981. Altho we promised to publish that last year, we didn't find room for it, and we didn't want to delay publication of the current survey given here. We will publish no. 8 eventually in some form, but we decided that it was best to give readers the most current results first.

We wish to convey our sincere thanks to everything who took the trouble to send us their ratings of the trains they had ridden. Our surveys will continue, and the present survey for which we are now soliciting ratings covers the period of Oct 30, 1983 thru Apr 28, 1984. On page 23 you will find a rating form to use. You need not use the form we provide. You can make up your own form as long as you follow our general directions. But please keep your ratings on separate sheets of paper from any other editorial or business correspondence to RTN.

Short Distance Trains

	A. Overall rating	B. Operating crew	C. Dining crew	D. Lounge crew	E. Food quality	F. Car condition (mechanical)	G. Car cleanliness	H. Track condition	I. Scheduling	J. Station condition	K. Type of cars—appropriate?	Rank in survey
METROLINER SERVICE	7.5	7.0	--	---	---	8.0	8.0	7.5	8.5	6.5	--	1
NEW ENGLAND METROLINER	7.5	7.0	7.5	--	7.0	8.0	9.0	5.5	8.0	5.0	9.0	1
HOOSIER STATE	7.4	8.2	--	6.6	6.2	7.2	7.8	7.2	7.8	5.8	7.0	3
SAN DIEGANS	7.2	7.1	6.5	6.5	5.8	7.2	7.3	7.2	8.1	7.4	8.1	4
SAN JOAQUINS	6.8	6.2	5.0	5.9	5.0	7.3	6.9	6.9	8.0	4.8	7.6	5
NEC Amfleet	6.6	6.2	7.3	6.6	5.2	6.8	6.7	6.8	6.8	5.1	7.1	6
STATE HOUSE	6.5	6.5	--	---	--	7.0	6.5	6.0	8.0	5.5	5.0	7
ANN RUTLEDGE	6.4	7.7	3.7	4.8	5.4	7.1	6.1	6.1	6.7	4.6	4.9	8
INTERNATIONAL	6.0	7.4	--	7.0	6.4	6.2	6.8	6.4	7.8	7.8	5.0	9
Canadian Trains	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	
CANADIAN	7.7	7.9	7.1	6.6	6.6	7.7	7.7	8.7	7.1	7.1	8.4	1
CAVALIER	7.5	8.0	--	---	--	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.5	8.5	8.0	2
OCEAN	7.2	7.2	7.8	8.0	6.5	7.2	7.8	7.8	7.2	7.5	8.5	3

The results above are divided into three categories: long distance, short distance and Canadian trains. The last column in each table gives the rank of each train within its category, ranked on the basis of category A, Overall Impression. While it is possible to rank the trains in other ways, we follow this practice for consistency. If a train does not appear in our tables, it means that we received too few ratings for it.

This is the first survey in which the RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR does not appear, as it was discontinued and replaced by the CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR just before the start of this survey period. As regular readers will remember, the RGZ was consistently the top-rated U.S. train in our last four published surveys. The Amtrak CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR, which replaced it, achieved a ranking of 13 (tied with the SOUTHWEST LIMITED) in this survey. (For the first two months of the survey period, the CZ continued to operate thru Wyoming rather than over the Rio Grande route because of a mudslide blocking the line.)

Amtrak's SILVER METEOR receives the top rating in this survey, followed closely by the EMPIRE BUILDER. One big change in rankings is the improvement in ratings of the COAST STARLIGHT, which jumped from 17th to 3rd place since our last published survey, a period which saw the introduction of Superliners on it. At the bottom of the list is the ADIRONDACK, dropping from 14th to 20th place. Close to it is the low-rated EAGLE, which with its predecessor the INTER-AMERICAN (last in our previously-published survey) continues to hover near the bottom of the pack in reader ratings of general impression.

In the short distance group, NEC Metroliner Service and the NEW ENGLAND METROLINERS are tied for first place, with overall ratings of 7.5.

In the Canadian group, rankings are consistent with previous surveys, except that the discontinued SUPER CONTINENTAL does not appear. The CANADIAN's overall rating of 7.7 was identical to that in our last-published survey.

We'll discuss these survey results more in future issues, and give you some samples of riders' comments on the trains.

First Train of 1984

BY GEORGE HYKO

New Year's Day of the infamous year 1984 dawned early, but notbright, in the Bay Area, as a London-type ground fog socked in most of the city. We were determined to escape 1984 as soon as it began, and what better way than by a train trip to Yosemite National Park?

The first train out of Oakland this year was the early morning SAN JOAQUIN, and we hurried as best we could thru the low fog to the station, and boarded our group of six only a few minutes before the scheduled 7:45am departure time. But we might as well have slept in longer, for the train sat there in the station and did not leave until 8:30, 45mins late. We could see no reason for the delay, and no announcements were made to passengers.

Amtrak is off to a bad start on Jan 1, I thought. Once we were underway, the trip was very pleasant. There were fascinating vistas of marshland in the vicinity of Pittsburg and Antioch. Once past Stockton and on the Santa Fe straight-line track down the Valley, you really move, and the general impression is of a mini-NE Corridor, albeit the lesser-populated sections of the Corridor. We had a long 5-car train today, which was heavily patronized. There were four Amcoaches (84-seat) and a food service car.

First you get a ticket, then you go 79 mph.

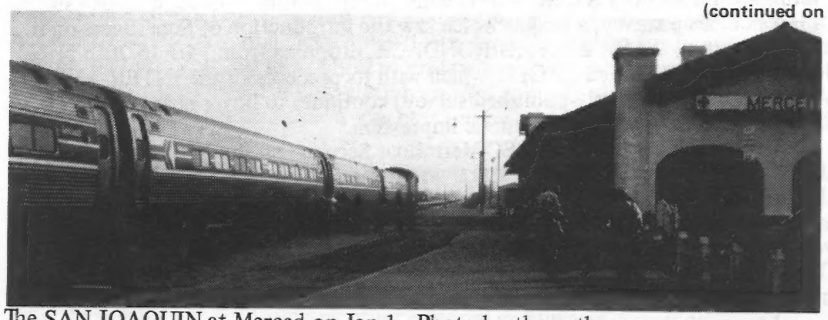
On board the San Joaquin

These trains are a terrific way to travel in the Valley, especially on days like this when you can rocket along thru the dense fog that makes highway driving so hazardous. We did hurry along, but somehow managed to lose 45mins more, so that our Merced arrival was 1½hrs late. That's a bit much for a trip that's scheduled for only 3 hours. The Yosemite bus driver at the Merced station was fit to be tied over the lateness. Some passengers were on a Yosemite-in-a-Day tour and were to have lunch at the Ahwahnee Hotel. The bus trip from Merced to Yosemite Valley takes two hours, and by hurrying he was able to get those passengers to the Ahwahnee by 1:45, just 15mins before lunch service ended. We were also on a tour, the Yosemite-Over-Nite tour. These tours are offered by California Yosemite Tours. On ours, we would stay one night at Yosemite Lodge and return the way we came the following afternoon.

Yosemite was beautiful, the weather a clear and mild 50-55, with 30 at night. The trip here is certainly to be recommended to all train travelers. The bus drivers even narrate the trip, pointing out such landmarks as the old right-of-way of the Yosemite Valley Railroad, complete with crumbling trestles, which is visible for miles paralleling highway 140.

One tip, however: you may save a lot of money by booking your train, Yosemite bus and Yosemite Valley accommodations separately rather than in a tour package.

(continued on p.21)



The SAN JOAQUIN at Merced on Jan 1. Photo by the author.

Silver Palm at Year One

BY JACK M. TURNER

With recent attention focused on Amtrak's new AUTO TRAIN, the first anniversary of Florida's SILVER PALM passed without fanfare in late November. Determined not to let the occasion pass without notice, I scheduled a post-Christmas Miami to Tampa trip.

Dec 26 was a cold day in Miami. Surely cold weather would keep upstate passengers off the train. The Miami station seemed to confirm this as only a couple dozen passengers awaited the trian. However, the PALM stood ready with four Amfleet II coaches and an Amfleet II lounge behind F40 engine 380. Normally the consist calls for two coaches and the lounge, so today's expected load must be high—a difficult thing to gauge, as this is an unreserved train, albeit the nation's only Amfleet II 403(b) train.

Departure from Miami at 8am came without the hoopla of last year's inaugural —no bands, no politicians, no office cars. The SILVER METEOR, poised to leave at 9am, stood across the platform as no.896 eased out of the Miami depot. The lounge was already open for breakfast and seemed to do a brisk business all morning. Steam rising from a huge lake near Plantation made me glad the new Amfleet II's were well-heated, as even South Florida was sub-freezing today.

A spritely crowd of perhaps 25 boarded at our first stop in Hollywood, where a connecting Ambus had carried some from Miami Beach. By meeting the train at this station, the bus can serve the length of Miami Beach at a fairly reasonable hour. Our schedule would be easily met today with most stops reached three or four minutes early. A dozen or so passengers would board at each stop, with approximately 30 getting on at always-busy Deerfield Beach.

By West Palm Beach, the two rear coaches were well-filled as the day's peak ridership of 95 was met. The evening's southbound run would hit a peak of almost double that figure. Our scheduled meet with the southbound SILVER STAR now should be coming up near Indiantown. However, that little town came and went as did Sebring and Winter Haven, and still no STAR. The weather up north must have hit it heavily.

At 11:50am we crossed over to the southbound main at SE Auburndale, and moments later there it was—the SILVER STAR, a cool 3½ hours late, just a half hour ahead of the SILVER METEOR's schedule. Here the SILVER PALM swings west, using an industrial spur line to move from the former Seaboard to the ex-Atlantic Coast Line tracks. Even with double stops at both end of the spur to throw switches, the entire process takes only 10 minutes. The west coast section of the SILVER STAR is not in sight and apparently is just ahead of us.

Our operating crew is with us all the way to Tampa, thanks to an agreement allowing them to work on two separate divisions. The conductor and two trainmen help passengers carry luggage to and from their seats, a service I once noticed on Southern's PIEDMONT.

The northbound SILVER METEOR from St. Petersburg passes by at 12:10pm and a glance at a Seaboard operating timetable reveals it still is designated the CHAMPION by SBD. At 12:57 we curve northward on the wye at 7th Avenue and 37th Street on Tampa's east side, backing down the west leg of the wye and back onto the ex-ACL line moments later. We cross the diamond where the ex-SAL line to St. Petersburg (still used by the STAR and METEOR) crosses and continues backwards at a leisurely pace. The old SAL parallels the ACL just a few blocks away on into Tampa Union Station, so I look down each street, hoping to catch a glimpse of the SILVER STAR heading to St. Pete.

Finally, as our 16-min backup move is nearing completion, I spy the STAR a couple of hundred feet away where the SAL and ACL lines diverge from Union Station. The STAR is backing out of the stub-end station to Gary, a wye just southwest of our 37th Street wye, where it will swing north onto the St. Petersburg line. As in the days of the old pointless arrow design, a glance at a backing-in SILVER PALM and backing out SILVER STAR

might lead observers to wonder if Amtrak is a backwards railroad.

Arrival in Tampa was on time at 1:15. The backup move had aligned the SILVER PALM for the afternoon departure. Waiting buses were ready to carry passengers to Clearwater and St. Pete as they had from Winter Haven to the Orlando/Disney World area.

The conclusion: The SILVER PALM at year one is a winner with its helpful crew, nice equipment, intermodal connections, and adequate ridership.

Lost Calls, Lost Money

RTN has received many complaints of readers' problems in reaching Amtrak reservations offices thru the toll-free Amtrak number. In late December, a Northwest reader reported that he was on hold for one hour before a reservation clerk answered.

Exactly how can we evaluate Amtrak's performance in handling calls for reservations and information? In terms of numbers of calls answered or not answered (lost), the data are very clear, for Amtrak maintains an apparently accurate count of these numbers daily.

Amtrak's data show that calls to the rail system have increased recently by substantial percentages, likely a result of the improved American economy. In the month of December, calls to the RSOs were up an average of 28% over Dec 1982. In December (for the 26 days for which we had data) Amtrak receoved 2,044,206 calls—substantially higher than the 1,609,374 calls received in Dec 1982. How did Amtrak do in handling these calls? Amtrak handled 24% more calls than it did in Dec 1982, but since the percentage increase in calls offered was greater than that, Amtrak actually performed worse than in Dec 1982 in handling calls. In fact, it lost over twice as many calls as it did a year before. In Dec 1983 (for those 26 days) Amtrak lost 131,306 calls, compared to 58,329 lost in Dec 1982. On only two days out of the 26 did Amtrak manage to handle a greater percentage of its calls than it did the year before, and these only by the slimmest of margins.

There is no way of knowing exactly how much revenue Amtrak lost by failing to connect with those 131,306 calls in December, but if we made the assumption that one out of ten calls would have resulted in a ticket sale, and that the average ticket sale was $28.78 (this latter figure based on the actual average ticket sale for the month of August—see RTN 277, page 23), then Amtrak would have lost $377,910 in December due to lost calls.

Amtrak lost on the average 5,050calls per day in December. Amtrak will argue that the month of December was atypical, that because of the abnormally cold weather in the latter half of December Amtrak was flooded with more calls than usual. And indeed it is true that calls increased more than expected from just a better economy on a few days during the last two weeks of December, but we are not primarily concerned with these unexpected fluctuations. What is of more concern is the steady poor performance that the RSOs are showing day in and day out. Altho we analyzed only the month of December in detail,a cursory inspection of the months of October and November showed that Amtrak's performance was on the whole no better then.

To put these matters in perspective, in Dec 1982 on Amtrak's best day it lost 203 calls. On Amtrak's best day in Dec 1983 it lost 2012 calls—nearly ten times as many. On Amtrak's worst day in Dec 1982 it lost 9,287 calls, while the worst Dec 1983 day saw 14,552 calls being lost. (In both those cases, the worst day was Dec 26.)

Besides the loss of revenue, these lost calls signal a breakdown of service to the public. All the many people who couldn't get the information they needed from Amtrak, or who had to call back and wait on hold for long stretches of time, were undoubtedly forming a poor image of Amtrak and quite possibly resolving not to travel by train in the future. They were also being inconvenienced by the rail transportation company that both their ticket dollars and their tax dollars are supporting.

The logical question to ask is whether Amtrak is employing enough clerks to handle the volume of calls it is receiving. If Amtrak is trying to economize by cutting to the bone on reservation clerks, it would certainly seem to be following a penny-wise and pound-foolish path.

Amtrak's managers try to hide these data behind a manipulation of figures such as lost-call ratios which reduce the data to small numbers. But the grossly large numbers of business calls that Amtrak is rejecting have risen to the point at which they can no longer be overlooked as possibly significant sources of Amtrak revenue loss.

Big Freeze of '83

A long cold wave with the lowest temperatures recorded in the U.S. in over 50 years, hit the country in mid-December and lasted thru the remainder of the month.

Weather conditions played havoc with transportation, and there were hundreds of deaths, many of them due to slick highways. Amtrak trains experienced marked lateness in many cases, with the hours late running into the 20's in many cases, the worst performance seen in a number of years. Altho Amtrak has a new equipment servicing facility in Chicago, the extreme temperatures there and the lateness of arriving equipment created a near-breakdown of operations there.

On Christmas Day, Amtrak summed up the systemwide situation as follows:

Record cold temperatures reaching below-zero readings from Indiana thru Oregon, blizzard conditions along the leeward side of the Great Lakes, and in Idaho, Eastern California and Utah caused the following:

- 50mph speed restrictions on all BN lines over which Amtrak operates.
- 40mph speed restrictions on Milwaukee Road between Milw. and Minneapolis.
- 40mph speed restrictions on the D&RGW between Salt Lake City and Denver.
- 40mph speed restrictions on the UP between Salt Lake City and LaGrande or Salt Lake City and Milford UT.
- 50mph speed restrictions on the MoPac between Ft. Worth& St. Louis/Kansas City.

In addition, numerous delays resulted caused by broken rails, switch failures, disabled freight trains, late-arriving operating crews because of failed ground transportation and road conditions. In the Chicago Terminal area, intermittent switch failures occurred at Bridgeport, Alton and Englewood, Union Avenue (including the BN wye).

Many long-distance trains required additional time to service equipment, fuel and take on additional supplies at intermediate points.

On the average, long distance service operated 4-7 hours late. Trains departing Midweat dispatching points averaged 90mins delay as a result of late-arriving connections, late-arriving inbound equipment, frozen water stanchions and sub-zero environmental conditions. In addition, it was necessary in some instances to dispatch trains with minor consist deviations in order to minimize switching and potential freeze-ups.

★★★

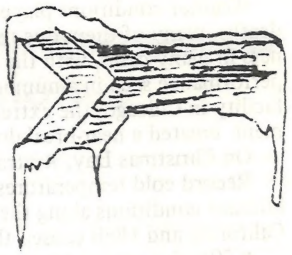
On Dec 23 and 24 Amtrak had to annull or cut back a number of passenger runs to cope with the problems. On the 23, the following short distance trains in the Midwest were annulled: 301, 355, 352, 381; train 59, the CITY OF NEW ORLEANS, of Dec 23, was terminated at Jackson MS and passengers transferred to four buses from New Orleans. Train 58 of the 24th originated at Jackson MS and passengers were brought from New Orleans in three buses. Train 48 of the 23rd, the LAKE SHORE LIMITED, terminated at Albany-Rennselaer. Train 28 of the 24th (EMPIRE BUILDER, Portland section) was annulled at Portland and no alternate service provided as a result of poor road conditions. Train 27 of Dec 22 was terminated at Spokane, while passengers and equipment continued thru to Seattle.

On Dec 25 the following trains were annulled: 350, 355, 301, 381, 391, 300, 382. On Dec 26 the following were annulled: 350, 381, 301, 382, 355, 321, 322 and 374.

The EMPIRE BUILDER, train 8 of Dec 23 was terminated at Minneapolis-St. Paul because of severe weather and late operation. Passengers were bused on. A makeup train operated for train 7 of the 25th between Chicago and St. Paul, with passengers transferring from it to turned equipment off the terminated no. 8.

On Dec 24, Amtrak ran out of diesel fuel at Washington Terminal Company. Its new facility capacity is about 25,000-30,000 gallons, with four tanks not yet set underground, and the Terminal used about 20,000 gallons per day. By 5:40pm, Andrews Air JForce Base had been contacted and was to send two 1300-gallon military fuel trucks, each to make two roundtrips with fuel for Amtrak. Both trucks arrived at 7:45 pm, but the pumps on both trucks broke down. At 6:14pm a private fuel company in Baltimore agreed to deliver 6-8000 gallons, and 30,000 more in the morning. The fol-

lowing changes to train schedules were made: On Dec 25 the COLONIAL, train 95, was annulled. Passengers were bused and delayed 5hrs, 25mins. The SILVER METEOR train 87 of the 25th, left with about 1000 gallons of fuel, after a 133-min delay, and was fueled at St. Petersburg by a private contractor, with a 41-min delay there. The CARDINAL, train 51 of the 25th, was given engine 367 from train 90 of Dec 25, which arrived in Washington with 1000 gallons in its tank.



The CARDINAL was able to make it to Clifton Forge without running out of fuel, and it was refueled there, at a cost of 20mins time. The CRESCENT, train 19 of the 25th, was delayed 285mins at Washington while 1000 gallons of fuel were added to engines 255 and 325; at Monroe, both tanks were topped off, with a 22-min delay.

The SHAWNEE, train 392 of Dec 25, had a minor derailment of the rear car at Alton Junction IL while backing over a frozen switch, at 6:43am. Equipment from annulled train 391 was used to bring passengers into Chicago Union Station.

The ANN RUTLEDGE, train 304 of the 25th, derailed both its engines and the lead truck of the first car at Rock Creek Junction MO at 11:40am when the engine crew reportedly went thru a red signal at Sheffield Interlocking. Passengers were bused on.

The CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR, train 5 of Dec 24, was blocked by a BN freight derailment between Barr and Tonville CO at 11:40am on Dec 25. The CZ was backed up to Brush CO and was detoured on the UP from Union CO to Denver via LaSalle, missing no station stops. It lost over 9hrs on the detour. The train was later reported 15½hrs late at Reno, and reached Oakland the morning of Dec 27 instead of the afternoon of the 26th and was met by helicopters and news media on a slow-news day. Trains 15 and 25 of the 23rd were both reported running over 15hrs late. Train 8 of the 23rd was running 8½hrs late.

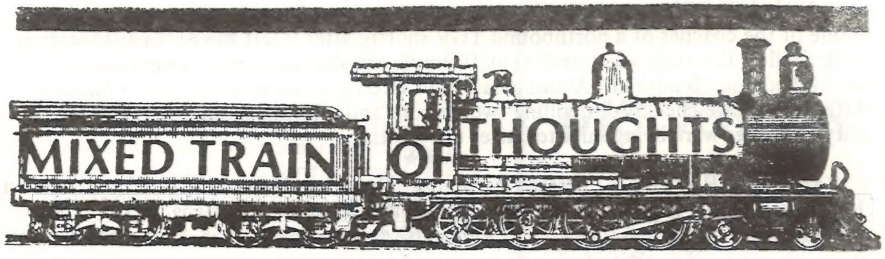
On Dec 26 in the NE Corridor, 44 trains were delayed from 2 to 41mins because of broken rails and pull-aparts due to extreme weather conditions. Six Corridor trains were reported with standees numbering from 30 to 150. On this date, numerous airline flights were cancelled, and with so many Amtrak trains running late, Amtrak had a high number of calls, losing 14,552 of them, but handling 80,942. (On the same date in 1982, Amtrak had an almost identical number of calls, but managed to handle 86,142 of them, while losing 9,287.)

On Dec 26, the EMPIRE BUILDER, train 7 of the 25th, had a minor derailment of the lead engine east of Fargo ND, delaying it 165mins. On the same date, the PIONEER, train 25 of the 23rd, derailed its lead engine on the approach to a BN swing bridge over the Willamette River just north of Portland OR. Reportedly, the engine crew went thru a red signal and derailed on the derail device which protects trains from entering an open swing bridge. The derail device was reportedly not replaced after this incident, and on Jan 1 a BN freight train reportedly went thru a red signal at the bridge and the lead engine plunged into the river, since the bridge was open, drowning two crewmen in the cab. Two days later the locomotive was lifted from the river. There was an unconfirmed report that BN is not replacing derail devices on its system, as an economy move.

The CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR, train 5 of Dec 26, derailed all wheels of lead engine 309 while traveling at 5mph nine blocks east of the Salt Lake City station, on the D&RGW. The train was delayed 135mins. The derailment was caused by ice in the flangeways on the 9th Street Crossing.

On Dec 29 a snow slide just west of Hinkle OR blocked the UP line and forced the PIONEER, train 25 of Dec 27 to detour on the BN from OT Jct to Wishram to Portland, and back onto the UP at Portland, missing The JDalles, Hood River and Cascade Locks. All highways were closed, so no buses could be used to service the missed stations. Affected passengers were housed overnight in Portland. The train was delayed about 3 hours.

There were many more incidents; the above are highlights of a difficult period.



AMTRAK RIDERSHIP FIGURES for November arrived just as we were about to close out this issue. We'll have room to publish all the fitures next issue, but here are the highlights for now: overall, ridership was up a spectacular 17.0%--mostly due to the Greyhound strike, Amtrak said. Long distance was up 37.4%, short distance up 19.7%, and NE Corridor up 10.1%. Total ridership was 1,683,481, compared to 1,438,834 in November, 1982.....

TOURNAMENT OF ROSES Parade in Pasadena CA was held this year on Jan 2. The incoming SOUTHWEST LIMITED, train 3, was running late and its passage was blocked by the parade. So at San Bernardino the train, now renumbered by Santa Fe "Extra Amtrak 232 West", detoured over the freight-only Santa Fe 3rd District via Colton, Riverside, Corona and thence to the SAN DIEGAN route at Fullerton for the trip into L.A. (That was the route used by the GRAND CANYON in pre-Amtrak days.) The same detour was used on Jan 1, 1975 and Jan 2, 1978. If the train is on schedule, it can squeeze thru Pasadena just before the parade begins.....

★★★

THE MICHIGAN EXECUTIVE was scheduled to be discontinued after its runs on Jan 13. The state withdrew funding for the 403(b) train because it could not justify paying for the service after its ridership had declined for the past three years. The state would have had to come up with $235,000 in fiscal year 1984.....

THE "GAMBLERS'S EXPRESS" has the green light. Passenger service between Philadelphia, New York and Atlantic City should get underway in the near future, after REsorts International agreed to provide $26 million, the share needed from the state of New Jersey, to acoompany $30 million already approved in Federal funds, to rebuild the railroad line into the gambling mecca and begin service, provided by Amtrak. Resorts International will build the station, and plans to build another casino adjacent to the train terminal. A New Jersey citizens' group which opposes the train service apparently has little basis for objection now, as state funds will not be used in getting the service started. Plans are for five roundtrips daily by Amtrak, and possibly for additional commuter-type service. (See also East Coast Report, page 4).....

★★★

FLORIDA'S HIGH-SPEED TRAIN plans are heating up. As reported last issue, the state of Florida on Dec 13 received a $500,000 grant from the Federal RR Administration to study high-speed rail service for Tampa-Orlando-Miami. The Florida High-Speed RAil Committee was busy at year-end receiving proposals for a bullet-type service on the route. It expected to receive up to 10 proposals. American High Speed Rail was one of those, and it said that $200 million per year would have to be put up by the state in order to make such a service viable. But a French coalition promoting the TGV, and represented in this country by former FRA Administrator Robert Blanchette, claimed that no public funds would be needed to build the system, as long as tax-exempt financing was available. The TGV group said that $2 billion would be the cost of its system, and the money could be obtained from the private sector. The Budd Company and American Mag-Lev were other groups submitting proposals. American Mag-Lev proposed a Tampa-Daytona Beach line with trains at speeds of 350mph. The Budd Co. suggested 250mph trains between Tampa, Orlando and Miami. On Dec 22 the conclusions of an 18-month study performed by Amtrak of high-speed service were presented to Gov. Bob Graham. Amtrak president Graham Claytor said of the study that it "provides strong encouragement for continued efforts by the state at research and development" of such a high-speed system.....

A FRENCH TGV was blasted by a terrorist bomb on Dec 31. The bomb exploded in one of the coaches of a northbound TGV shortly after it left the St. Charles station in Marseille. The train was traveling at 100mph, but did not derail. Two passengers were killed and 20 injured. About a half hour later, a bomb went off at the Marseille station's baggage checkroom, killing two persons and injuring about 38. Increased security measures were being initiated after the blasts.....

★★★

SANTA FE RAILWAY operated its annual "Rose Parade Special" on Jan 2 between the General Office Building in the City of Commerce and the Pasadena depot. The train consisted of engines 2563, 2559,lounge 62 and business car 58. The train was for dignitaries, shippers and their invited guests. Not to be outdone, SP operated its "Rose Bowl Special" San Francisco-L.A. on Jan 1. Consist of that train was engines 3197 and 3199, baggage cars 295 & 298, sleeper 292, diner 290, lounge 291, and business cars 117 "Tucson", 131 "Los Angeles", 151 "Pine Bluff", 99 "Houston", 141 "Oakland", 100 "Airslie", and 140 "Stanford." UP ran no special train this year.....

NORFOLK SOUTHERN CORPORATION on Jan 6 said that it is interested in acquiring Conrail. The rail corporation said it will immediately start a study of the matter. If it acquired Conrail, Norfolk Southern would become the nation's largest railroad, with 33,000 miles of track in the eastern half of the country. The DOT wants to sell Conrail, but the only other offer to date is from Conrail's employees.....

★★★

THE ALASKA RAILROAD has expressed serious interest in buying the EL CAMINO equipment that is in storage in Southern California. The domed train of steam-heated equipment operated in 1978 on the SAN DIEGAN route as a commuter train. L.A. County is now trying to sell the equipment.....

AMTRAK'S AUTO TRAIN has now apparently made some adjustments to train size at the Lorton terminal, reports Robert Clark. The Dec 29 train arrived at Sanford with three more auto carriers than the previous northbound train, and one more passenger car. The severe cold seemed to have an effect on the other southbound Amtrak trains, he noted. After a long period of very close schedule-keeping, the Florida trains showed several hours lateness Christmas and after (see also "Big Freeze of 83" in this issue). Amtrak told the Orlando Sentinel that the AUTO TRAIN carried 5287 passengers and 2800 cars in November (in 26 trips). Amtrak said the train should show a $4 million profit by the end of December. Robert Clark calculates: "The 26 trips in November carried a total of 462 auto carrier one-way trips. If a full 23 auto carriers had been on each run, there would have been 598 auto carrier one-way trips. That is 77% of full train operation of auto carriers. The average autos carried per carrier trip comes to 6.06, which shows that they are running the full 12 autos per carrier southbound and nearly zero northbound. It also shows that they are carrying nearly all large autos that have only four per carrier platform level." Mr. Clark says that Amtrak resumed keeping two P30 engines at Sanford after the Dec 24 train came in with three onit, on a 28-car train.....

★★★

A MONORAIL TRAIN being built for the New Orleans World's Fair was shown in newspaper photos in early January. The trains seems to have the shape of BART cars, but narrower due to their being monorails.....

OAKLAND-RENO TRAIN plans are still moving ahead. Caltrans and the Nevada DOT expect to meet later in January to discuss a joint funding of this service.....

"NEW FALL FARES" are still being advertised by Amtrak in January, in places like the NY Times Magazine. Quote: "Fall is the best time to visit America's great cities, beaches and mountains. The foliage is breathtaking..." The timely railroad.....

OKLAHOMA CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION will hear results of Amtrak's Oklahoma study when Congress reconvenes the week of Jan 23.....

NORTHBOUND AUTO TRAIN gets special off-peak fares Jan 10-Feb 23: $79 instead of $130, for child $60 instead of $98 for rail fare.....

ST. LOUIS-CARBONDALE route is stymied by capital demands of ICG.....

News in this issue is updated thru Jan 10, 1984.

Carl Loucks

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QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"A store on Manhattan's Seventh Avenue sells a T-shirt proclaiming 'I survived a ride on New York's subways.' As a long-suffering subway rider I can understand why most Americans would stay away from Europe's subways in droves. But with a few exceptions, the subways overseas are clean, efficient, safe and great help in sightseeing...

"And the subways of Europe are part of integrated systems that combine underground, buses, streetcars and even suburban trains in one fare. Larger cities are frequently divided into zones, however, and figuring out the fare from point A to point B can be an adventure."

—William Cross in San Francisco Examiner, Dec 18, 1983.

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FIRST TRAIN OF 1984 (continued from page 14)

The cost of the non-rail part of our package for six people was $499.70. We learned too late that we could have saved $163.06 by making our own reservations. In fact, we could have saved about $52.50 more by skipping the Valley sightseeing tour which was included in our package. Altho theoretically there are six options to choose from once you are in Yosemite, only two were available when we were there, due to weather and the season: the Valley tour or ice skating. Ice skating would have cost only $24 if we paid it separately, and the Valley tour could be done on the park's free shuttle buses or on foot.

The biggest irritant of our trip, however, was the failure of the SAN JOAQUIN's crew to explain or even acknowledge our 45-min late departure or our 1½–hr lateness into Merced. This lateness robbed us of 1½ hours of precious, expensive time in the park. (The people on the Yosemite-in-a-Day tour had only 2½ hours in the park, most of that time eating lunch, as the return bus leaves at 4:15pm to meet the 6:58pm northbound train at Merced and the 7:48pm southbound train.) No one on the train ever so much as mentioned our lateness, let alone apologize for it. They simply acted as if it had never happened. (We deduced later that the Oakland departure was held until the COAST STARLIGHT's departure time of 8:30, since the STARLIGHT was very late from Seattle, to accommodate passengers going south who needed to make connections in L.A. If we had been told that at the time, we would have understood the problem and would have felt better about the whole trip.)

Our train back to Oakland on Jan 2 left Merced on time and reached Oakland 15 minutes late. It was another well-patronized 5-car SAN JOAQUIN.

RAIL FANTRIPS

Feb 4: NARP Region XII annual meeting, San Francisco Hotel, 1231 Market, San Francisco, 12:30 pm. $16 meeting & luncheon. Reserve before Jan 30. NARP Region XII, 1321 Marshall St #/412, Redwood City CA 94063. Amtrak Operations man will speak.

Feb 25: New England States Ltd, Boston-Brattleboro VT via ex-NYNH&H to New London, then Central Vermont Rwy Southern Div (110 mis frt only). Return via Palmer MA & B&A. $39, child $24. Mass. Bay RR Enthusiasts, Box 525, Bedford MA 01730.

May 27: Challenger 3985 mainline excursion on UP. Denver/Laramie/Denver trip with 3985 on Sherman Hill; diesel power on Colorado portions. Rocky Mountain RR Club, PO Box 2391, Denver CO 80201.

Jul 14-15: Denver CO Mile High RAILFAIR. America's premier RR show featuring railroadiana, models, layouts, RRs, authors, artists, railroadiana dealers, movies, door prizes including tickets for the CZ. Over 125 exhibits. Intermountain NRHS, Box 5181, Terminal Annex Denver 80217.

Send large SASE when responding to listings. One Rail Fantrips listing is free. Send info to: RAIL TRAVEL NEWS, Fantrips Dept, PO Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.

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GISELLE'S TRAVEL CORP at 1215 4th St. Sacramento CA 95814, Phone: (916) 446-1211 offers rail tickets on AMTRAK—VIA (CANADA)—EURAILPASS along with tours and accommodations in cities to which you are traveling. Let Giselle's help you take your next memorable rail trip.

OFFICIAL Ass'n of Railway Museums First Day of Issue cover, with 4 streetcar stamps, $2.00 each. Also, special Oct. 1st Street Railway Post Office cancellation, Trolley Station Kennebunkport ME with Transportation series stamps, $1.25 each. Send SASE to Ass'n of Railway Museums, P.O. Box 3454, Portland, ME 04104.

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA RAILROADS: THE SILVER AGE, 1945-1960, by Fred Matthews. Photographic history of the era when interurbans, steam and streamliners overlapped in a rich tapestry of rail operations. Vol. I includes electrics, standard pass. trains, Valley, Sierra, desert. 224pp, 48 full color, 160 b&w, maps; 8½x11. $32 at bookstores or from Sundance Publications, 250 Broadway, Denver CO 80203.

According to the Dec. '83 NARP NEWS, the NARP board altered the association's By-laws at its fall meeting. I am not aware that the board so much as bothered to even inform the members that such an action was contemplated. Since the members never granted the board the power to alter the By-laws without prior submission to the membership for approval, I hereby ask the NARP board under what legal authority they were able to alter the By-laws this past October. Alfred E. Ehm, 170 Carousel Drive, San Antonio, Texas 78227.

BACK ISSUES RTN, Passenger Train Journal, other transportation magazines. SSAE for list. J. Franzen, 536 N. Pleasant St., Jackson MI 49202.

NEW ENGLAND! "Rail Abandonments in New England, 1845-1981." Dates, details of 300+ abandonments! Complete index. Only $3.25 postpaid. Ronald Karr, 7423 N. Winchester no. 51, Chicago IL 60626.

"Issues in American Rail Travel," RTN's little book on important problems with America's rail passenger revival, is almost ready for publication. Price will be $4.50, which includes relevant tax & post. Full details will be given later in RTN. PO Box 9007 Berkeley CA 94709

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INSTRUCTIONS: Rate each train on each of the 11 categories (A-K) listed below: (A) Your overall impression of the train, taking everything into account; (B) Service from operating crew (conductor, etc.); (C) Dining or snack crew service; (D) Lounge crew service; (E) Food quality; (F) Car mechanical condition; (G) Car cleanliness and housekeeping; (H) Condition of track & roadbed; (I) Desirability of train's schedule; (J) Condition of stations; (K) Appropriateness of type of equipment used.

Use the 9-point rating scale below. Please submit ratings on separate sheet from other correspondence. Thank you for your participation!

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Extremely poor — Average, acceptable — Extremely good

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													1
													2
													3
													4
													5
													6

*COMMENTS: To add comments, copy circled number on separate sheet, write train name after it, followed by your comments.
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